Important text today. This is the end of Luke’s Gospel, there’s like 4 verses after this and book the ends, as we have it in the bible. So this is the last scene so to speak in the drama and what happens then is really important. And what we see just as an initial reading is two things that Luke wants to make sure that we understand. The first of course is that Jesus in his resurrected state has a physical body. Flesh and bone that the disciples can touch. Every week in the creed we confess the resurrection of the body, it’s absolutely critical and essential. We don’t confess the resurrection of the soul or of a spirit. In the movies when resurrected people are presented they often look like this. Or we have this image. The Christian faith does everything possible to protect us to save us if you will from these kind of ideas.

Luke wants us to know that the resurrection includes the restoration of the physical. God is made known through the physical. If I can jump around a little to introduce you to the serious of this I’ll point to 1 John 4:2 “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.” God is not made known apart from the physical.

In the church we call this sacramental. This is baptism. This is communion. God comes to us through the most common and ordinary things like bread and wine, and water that we can touch and feel physically. This communicates the Spirit. The spirit comes through the physical. You cannot in any way then separate the spiritual from the physical. Sometimes we talk like we can’t see God. How do we know God is real, we can’t see him? But Jesus said he was in the hungry, the naked, those in prison. We can see those things. You see God through the physical. Luther said, if you want to see Christ look at your neighbor. We can see that. God is made known in the flesh. Not just 2,000 years ago, but today. This is Jesus Christ. God made known in the flesh.

Luke thinks it’s really important. Because often we resist this I think. We don’t want God mixed up in our physical reality. So where do we we put God? Oh, maybe up there. God’s way up there in the sky. Out of the way. Sometimes God is all about how I feel subjectively. I get a feeling. I talk to a lot of people who know its God because they get a certain feeling. There certainly is a place for the still quiet voice within, but you need to think about that pretty carefully. God is in every feeling, not just certain ones. But no matter, we downplay our bodies all the time in popular religion. If you listen to the TV preachers the flesh is of the devil. We look at the person in the casket and we say “well, that’s just their body. Their soul went to heaven.” Luke is making sure that we will reconsider this please.

The consequences of this kind of thinking are rather severe. Because what happens is that we begin to think of our bodies and the world as somehow less important. To the point where the physical is downplayed all together. The important thing is saving your soul and getting to heaven. The body is just a container for the soul, and just for a short time on earth. The earth is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through. This a serious deviation from the biblical world view and into Greek philosophy. Luke is fighting all of this in our Gospel lesson today.

A very concrete and down to earth example of why this is so important. This is what happens if you turn the body into a container and think the real issue is your soul. I brought with me this morning a quart of milk. It’s past the experiation date because I don’t drink much milk. But as you look at it, you can see our issue this morning. Here is the container and then inside there is the milk. And question that I would ask you is morning is this. What is more important to us, the container or the milk? The way I have thought about it virtually all my life, the most important thing is the milk. The container is just to be thrown away right? It doesn’t have much value to us. The container isn’t important, what’s important is on the inside, that’s the thinking. It’s the same thing that we do with the spiritual and physical right? The real thing is the soul, the boy is just a container that rots when you die.

Well, what is the consequence of this way of thinking about the container and the milk? Yeah, it’s this. (pictures). This is getting to be kind of an important issue isn’t it? But this is what happens when you make the milk more important than the container. Guess what? It’s not. And now the ocean is filling up with plastic and it’s getting into fish and the pollution is getting into our food. What we’re finding out, and more and more and more every day is that the container is just as important as what it in it. We need to rethink this whole thing…..and thankfully many are.

This is why we say every week in our creed that we believe in the resurrection of the body. The container is just as important as the spirit within. Our bodies are not throw aways. You’re body is just as important as your soul to God. Paul said you body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And the way you treat it and regard it, is just as important as the way you care for you heart, or mind or will. The condition of your spirit affects your body. The condition affects your spirit. It’s true it think that sometimes this gets turned around and your body can become more important than your spirit. The container and what it looks like becomes the most important thing. There is a body worship that happens in our culture, and you become obsessed with how you look and you’re appearance and being ripped.

But that’s just the flip side of what Luke is trying to say. The physical is just as important as the spiritual. You body is just as important as your soul or heart. The earth is just as important as heaven. Heaven is just as important as the earth. The resurrection restored them both. God is working to bring health and healing to your body and your soul. And he will raise both body and soul on the last day. You can’t really believe in the God Luke is trying to present here and fill your body with junk food for example or destructive chemicals. Your missing the message.

It’s so interesting here, that when the disciples are in a pickle and afraid, that Jesus sets them right how? Touch me and see. It’s his physical nature that reveals his presence. It’s not a feeling that the disciples got, not warmth that came over them. I’m not dismissing God’s inner voice, or conscience but that’s only one way we hear from God. It’s when they could physically touch him, that they knew it was Jesus. Physical touch was the key here. And so often, when it all comes down to it, it’s a touch isn’t it that says it all. That communicates more than words ever could the presence of Jesus and what we mean by the Good News. Precious Lord, take my hand. Not my soul, or my will. Take my hand. It’s just a better way to say it. A better way to experience God.

Physical touch is inseparable from spiritual healing. I’m not that good with this subject, but there are hundred and hundreds of articles in scientific journals that have studied the importance of touch in a person’s overall health. Children who don’t get it are severely wounded for the rest of their lives. We’re just wired for touch. You walk into the museum and there’s this really cool old car sitting there in the middle of the room. But it’s roped off and in front of the car will be a sign and it says what? Do not touch. Why? Because we just have to touch to make it real. I remember walking into antique stores when I was a kid and mom said, “Just don’t touch anything”. It wasn’t easy. We’re made so that the spiritual comes through the physical. We’re made for that connection.

You get a group of kids in a room and what happens. Everyone is trying to touch everyone and the adults are saying, “keep your hands to yourself”. Little babies just have to touch everything and they will grab your face and pull on your lips and take your glasses off, and gouge your eyes out. This is connection. This is how we connect. What the heck would life be like if we’re just a soul? It doesn’t work. One of the tragic things about the corona virus was that you had to talk to people through glass, you couldn’t actually touch them or be there. That was terrible. That’s not how it’s meant to be. The spirit is made known through the physical, and especially touch is central.

Now days, you have to be really careful about how you touch people of course, you better figure that out or you’ll be in jail. Touch is that important, and you can ruin a person’s soul and heart with inappropriate touch. That’s how crucial our lesson is today. Without your body, you’re in trouble in this world and the next. It is true that sometimes you can look at your face in the morning and it’s like, yeah ditch this thing, it’s time for a new one. What Luke is trying to say with all of this emphasis on the physical is that your face too, is an essential way that we experience God. God will make your face new, not throw it away in the trash. The spiritual comes through the physical. And we are called to be just as concerned about our bodies and their welfare as we are about our soul and where it ends up. We are called to be just as concerned about the earth as we are about heaven. One is not superior to the other. Not in Jesus Christ. God will restore them both. Amen.